



## Ma'lula and its Dialect

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## MA'LULA AND ITS DIALECT.

THE village of Ma'lula in the Anti-Libanus has a three-fold interest for the traveller. Its situation and surrounding scenery are unique, its cave-dwellings and rock-tombs give evidence of an ancient but active existence, while in its dialect we find a certain strange survival of the Aramaic which Christ spoke not 150 miles away.

My first glimpse of Ma'lula was in March 1888, on my way to Palmyra. Roughly speaking, Ma'lula is about 25 miles to the north-east of Damascus, and is reached in about eight hours. At about three and a-half hours' distance from that city the path crosses a steep ridge and enters a broad rolling valley running N.E. and S.W., bounded on the east by slight hills, rising in places to higher peaks. The western boundary is one long, almost unbroken, ridge, of a curious formation. The mountain runs up smoothly for several hundred feet, with a surface of light tinted shale and gravel, terminating in a palisade of reddish-yellow limestone, from 50 to 150 feet in height, making an irregular sky-line. This columnar wall runs along the top of the ridge for 20 miles or so. It takes strange fantastic shapes, often like pillars or pilasters, now like giant teeth with monstrous roots, and now like animal forms. The red and yellow of this irregular wall cutting sharp against the vivid blue produces a brilliant effect of colour. Sometimes the gravelly hill appears above the palisade, but not often.

Before reaching Ma'lula the ridge is twice broken, once by a gorge leading to the small village of Jeb'adin, and again where the Yebrûd road crosses through a second gorge to the higher hills. About three miles beyond this point the ridge curves sharply inward and downward, rights itself for a few hundred yards, then curves outward and upward again, and resumes its former N.E. direction. In the meantime it has formed a deep basin, the shape of an amphitheatre, bounded by massive cliffs, which are pierced at the two inward corners by rapidly-ascending gorges. Great rocks and boulders lie on the steep slopes, or are heaped together at the base of the cliffs. Clinging to these rocks, rising tier above tier, like the cells of a honeycomb, are the houses which form the village of Ma'lula. The houses are built of *libin* or unburnt brick, rough unhewn stones, and mud. A few arches appear. Many of the flat roofs project, and are supported by posts, thus forming a sort of balcony. Brushwood is used in the roofs and peeps out from under the eaves. The mud and scant whitewash give the town an appearance of brown and white. The houses are at all angles: one stands out boldly on a great rock, another retreats under the overhanging precipice. A simple square Church with belfry gives point to the collection of simple houses. Under the north cliff lie the substantial buildings of the Convent of Mar Tukla. On this same side of the town there are a few substantial stone houses, but as a rule the buildings differ little from each other, in point of simplicity.

A valley opens out from the Ma'lula natural amphitheatre into the long upland, which I have mentioned. It is watered by streams from the

two gorges, and is rich in great walnut and other fruit trees, as plums, pistachio, and apricots. The limestone soil is of a dazzling whiteness, especially just outside the amphitheatre, where the path crosses ledges of soft polished white rock, easily carved, and used very effectively in decoration, as in the houses of Yebrûd. At the north side of the village threshing floors have been carved out of the hillside—rounded, level places—curious white spots in the landscape. Beyond these the hillside is strewn with sumach trees, or shrubs, used in tanning. Judging from the number of threshing floors I should say that the town must own many wheat fields in the rolling country below. Perched high above the lofty cliffs at the back of the town is the Convent of Mar Sarkis, with its metal dome. On these upper hills, the colour of maize, are many vineyards.

These general features were noticed in my first visit, when we passed through hurriedly. As we entered further into the cliff-bound recess we saw the caves high up in the face of the precipices to north and south, and the dozens of square entrance holes to chambers within the cliff at the back of the town—some apparently inaccessible, so high were they.

We rode through the twisting streets, finding the people very friendly. Once the path wound along a covered gallery fifty feet long, with dwellings above. Soon the path became precipitous; we dismounted and led our horses up a series of ledges. The baggage animal, which was ahead, slipped and began to roll, we, meanwhile, standing each on his own ledge quite helpless in view of the coming avalanche. Fortunately something stopped the horse, but the load had to be carried up by men through the magnificent gorge. At the end it is simply a climb up a fissure, where the horses lifted their legs from one deep hole in the rock to another.

In June of this year (1889) a friend and myself planned to spend a few days at Ma'lula, being curious to find out something about the Syriac dialect spoken by the inhabitants. We arrived on a Saturday evening, and remained till the following Thursday morning. In the meantime we asked many questions, and examined the Convents, cliff chambers, and tombs. I had not at the time the plan of writing an exhaustive article on the place, hence the impressions here given are merely those of an interested traveller, and lack many particulars which a scientific description should contain.

We approached the village from the north-east, as we were coming from Yebrûd, having crossed the ridge about an hour to the north. We pitched our tent on a spot cleared and built up for a threshing floor, on a slope of the hill below the northern cliff, at some little distance from the village. On Sunday, the people having no work to do, crowded about the tent—sitting outside the door, peeping in through the cracks, and even crouching inside. Oddly enough they were not troublesome. They simply wished to "admire." They were neither impertinent nor intrusive, and they kept quiet. We found their good humour unflinching. They were alert, active, and merry, but without the same conceit one finds in the Lebanon. The type of face did not seem to me as distinct as that of

Yebrûd ; dark hair and eyes are the rule ; the faces are round, and the features not striking. There were many comely women, with fresh complexions. We saw few dull countenances. We heard the echoes of one or two violent quarrels, but in their general mutual intercourse the people seemed gentle and agreeable. Their enterprise is shown by the number of men and boys who go to Damascus for work, always, however, regarding Ma'lula as their home. The majority go as bakers, while some are servants. Baking is the art of the town ; the brother of the Sheikh works in the oven.

After some inquiry we estimated the population at 2,000, including the absent. Two-thirds are Greek Catholics, the remainder are Orthodox Greek, with about twenty Moslem families, not to be distinguished in dress or language from the Christians. The people seem about on a par with each other, there being no aristocracy. The Greek-Catholic priest is a native of the place. He spoke a little French. The men all wear the veil or shawl on the head, falling over the shoulders. It is bound with thick camel-hair rope. The cloth robe which they wear over their waistcoat and full trousers struck me as much shorter than what one usually sees. The men are not heavily bearded, nor does the beard seem to come as early in youth as it does in the Lebanon. There is a school in the village, where we saw a few small boys. The teacher boards with the pupils by turn. He teaches Arabic, reading, and writing. He was sent to the town by the Bishop of Yebrûd.

All speak the Syriac dialect ; they say a woman brought as a bride from elsewhere can learn it in a year. At the same time they all speak Arabic like any Syrian. They seemed much interested and amused by our desire to look into their language, and were most good-natured in answering questions, but we found a varying intelligence in their answers ; the trouble with many being that they gave much more than was asked. Speaking the Arabic, I found little difficulty in obtaining information. If in doubt as to what one person meant, I could always ask another.

The streets in the village are often ledges of rock along the steep slope. The houses are sometimes built over the street. Near the north gorge there is a house wedged in between the overhanging cliff and a huge boulder, with an arched gallery beneath it for the highway. It has a balcony in front, supported by a single beam. The light green of willow branches contrasts with the whitewashed wall. Entering the passage under the house, we followed it up sharply to the left, and there found on our right a narrow flight of mud-steps, whitewashed, leading back to a platform-roof opening on which was the door of the house ! Within everything was very clean. The rough walls formed by cliff and boulder were whitewashed. A sick man lay on a bed on the floor. His son, who had been in Damascus, and kept one of the three small shops in the village, asked us how we made gunpowder, as he wished to compare our method with his own.

Later we called at another house in response to a cordial invitation from its mistress. From a small enclosed yard whitewashed steps of mud

led up to a roof in front of a house of two rooms. Steps, roof, walls, floor were all of this whitened mud, which comes off on the clothes. The room in which we were received had two windows and small openings above for ventilation. In one corner a cone-shaped chimney of mud came down to within 3 feet of the floor. At the angles between it and the walls there were ornamented pockets of mud. Its surface was also ornamented. The projecting angle of the chimney had a place for a lamp. Below there was no hearth, but only a place for one pot or kettle rounded out from a low platform of mud. The mud of the walls in the room was worked into pockets, ledges, shelves, rudely ornamented in rosettes and twists, with bits of glass stuck in. Chimneys are not found in the Lebanon houses, but they occur in the Anti-Libanus as near the Buka'a as Zebedani. In the other room the family stores were kept in jars made of mud and straw, whitewashed. Later in the day a fierce wind blew threatening to overthrow the tent, so we took refuge in this clean house for two nights. The woman baked bread (barley bread as well as wheat) for the neighbours, who paid her in kind, the number of loaves being left to generosity. A fire kindled at the bottom of a pit in a mud projection at the side of the house heated its sides, against which were stuck the flat loaves, which gradually became baked.

In passing through the town we found the houses clean. We were often warned against bye-paths, because of the house-dogs. They certainly had a most villainous look. Bees are kept. We could get no meat, as there happened to be a feast, but in a village like Ma'lula there would hardly be meat oftener than once a week. Such people live on bread, cheese, olives, eggs, dibs, and vegetables in their season. Unripe fruit is much prized—as grapes (eaten with salt), plums, &c. The people rise with the dawn.

The Sheikh's house differed little from the rest, but it had a stone doorway, with some carving and coloured ornamentation. The office of Sheikh continues in the same family. He was away, but his brother (who left the oven to entertain us) said that the house was to be improved and enlarged.

In speaking of the caves and rock-chambers of Ma'lula it will be convenient to refer to the South Cliff, Central Cliff, and North Cliff of the great natural amphitheatre. These cliffs are about 150 feet in height. About 35 feet above the base of the South Cliff a cave opens in the face of the rock, the entrance being about 20 feet in length. A rude ladder, made by two irregular branches or trunks of ancient walnut trees, with rounds fastened by large nails, is the rather risky means of approach. Our servant climbed up first, disappeared in the cave, and then reappeared at a square window cut in the face of the rock some 40 feet to the left of the entrance (as we looked at it) and rather above it. We then scaled the ladder, and scrambled around the rude masonry that forms a parapet at the entrance of the cave. This wall is made partly of stones and partly of large blocks of wood. Within there are two or three plastered walls (in a somewhat ruined condition) of mud and straw, forming small

passages and shutting off the main part of the cave, which runs sloping up *behind* the face of the cliff for some 52 feet. This, added to the 20 feet of entrance, gives 72 feet as the face length. The cave then turns and slopes up inward for 70 feet more. Here the breadth is considerable. The height is from 10 to 15 feet. Before the cave turns inward a low, artificial passage leads off at right angles, through which one must creep, into a small chamber, from which a similar gallery leads to the interior cavern. Marks of the chisel or pick are everywhere visible, so that it is impossible to tell how much a natural cavern may have been enlarged. The square window in the face of the cliff has an embrasure of 3 or 4 feet, and a parapet with a drainage hole below to the right. The cliff below this hole is stained. Sockets and holes at the side show that the window may have been bolted or barred. Near the entrance, within the cave on a ledge, there are signs of an ancient inscription in large Greek letters, irregularly following the irregular surface of the ledge, something like this :—

NEO-ICIOC ETC

TA T  
PA

It was not until we had been in the cave for an hour that we noticed the faint letters, and I daresay a strong sun might reveal others. A few ruder letters in red paint also occur ; also there were some plaster remains on the cave wall, rough figures of a giraffe, a horse, a bird, and a camel, with rider apparently holding an umbrella ! This last I do not recall, but my friend assures me he saw it. We noticed pretty maidenhair growing above another ledge, then damp moss on the ledge itself, then a basin scooped out, a foot across, with a tiny channel 8 inches long leading to a small hole. This was the only sign we saw of a water supply in the cave.

When we descended to the base of the cliff we found a stout, jolly man, bearing a strong resemblance to King Henry the Eighth, who said that in the troubles of 1860 he had hid for days in that cave with the women and children. All the walls within were then there : they did nothing to the place. In the face of the same cliff, somewhat to the west, there is another cave, with masonry at the entrance. This the man said was smaller, and we did not visit it. At the base of the cliff, some yards up, there are holes 12 or 15 inches square, cut in the rock at regular intervals, probably beam ends, used in the roof of some building, perhaps some public place, as the structure indicated must have been large. This cliff-castle is similar to the better known one in the Southern Lebanon, Kala'at Niha, near Jezzín, where the Emir Fukher-ed-din Ma'n, held out against the Turks. There a long ledge projecting from a cliff was utilised for castle and dwelling ; beam ends occur above each other, suggesting two or three stories, water was brought by a channel from above, small reservoirs appear, granaries were carved in the rock, &c., &c. The Emir must have taken advantage of some ancient cliff dwelling, dating perhaps from the time of the one at Ma'lula.

On the huge detached boulders at the foot of the South Cliff are found many tombs. In many cases they are simply cut in the tops of rocks. One rock, far below, has steps cut to the top. There seems to have been a passion for cutting in these stones, as there are many shallow, arched recesses on detached rocks, apparently useless. Other arched recesses have a couple of tombs in them. On one great boulder an elaborate arch is cut, with a balustrade below and several deep tombs within. In another place the tombs are two deep, with a ledge, as if for cover between.

The West Cliff, directly above the town, is perforated with many square holes—entrances to dwellings cut in the heart of the rock. Some of these have been fitted with modern doors, and are used as storehouses. One is so high that at a distance it seems quite inaccessible, but on approach one finds beam-ends below, showing that the cliff-chamber might have been approached from the roof of some building in front. At the south end of this central cliff the beam ends occur in several tiers, above each other. In one place steps lead up the cliff to a chamber. We entered several rooms and found them of varying sizes, some as large as 15 feet square. At the back of one chamber there was an arch, and on the surface of the rock at its side, slightly smoothed for the purpose, was this inscription, not perfectly clear, but apparently inclusive :

ΕΤΟΥΧΙΥΥ – ΙΟΦΙΧΛΟΥ  
ΠΑΤΡΟΚΛΟΥΕΠΟΙΗΣΑ  
ΝΤΗΝΚΟΝΧΗΝΟΓ  
ΜΕΡΟΥΧΜΟΙΣΟΥΣ  
ΠΩΘΕΩΜΑΛΑΧΗΔΑΑ  
ΕΙΑΝ

Another rock-dwelling consisted of two rooms. In one room at the side there was an elevation as for seat or divan. The rock hung down somewhat over the lintel of the inner door, which had this inscription, in rude letters, some of which were rather indefinite :

ΕΤΟΥΧΟΥΑΥΔΝΕΟΥΓΧΕΙΛΟΣ  
ΖΑΒΔΕΟΥΑΒΙCΑΛΥΥΛCΕΡΜΟΥ

In another chamber we found traces of a much longer inscription of nine lines, too indistinct for us to read. The guide told us that the above inscriptions had been copied by travellers. All the chambers in the West Cliff are quite artificial, the walls are always straight and the angles true. Slightly carved in the face of the cliff is a large arch, apparently to no purpose. Here also are small recesses like those we noticed below. In one chamber a small channel or open drain crosses the floor and disappears into the mountain at the back of the room. In another are two vats, one lower than the other but connected with it.

On the rocks outside the chambers and at a little distance are more tombs, but the chambers themselves as a rule are without tombs.

The rocks and cliffs of the South Gorge are wild and splendid, but contain no tombs. A side valley, lined with fantastic rocks and choked with boulders, enters from the south. Near by, a huge rock hollowed out like an oblong box, set on end, is called the "Hanging Place," because of a round hole in the top. One looks up to the summit of the South Cliff and is startled by its resemblance to a bear. A shallow groove runs down the cliff at one side of the gorge; as it comes to nothing it looks as if it were merely to drain the rocks above, especially as we find these drain-lines in the cliffs above the convent of Mar Tukla.

The North Gorge is more interesting. The path for horses climbs over the rocks at one side, but we followed up the brook which emerged from a narrow fissure with lofty perpendicular sides. Narrower grew the winding chasm, and we had to use our hands quite as much as our feet in getting along. Presently we heard a sound behind us, and we flattened ourselves against the walls to let pass two women with cows. As they splashed through the tiny brook their progress was more rapid than ours. They told us that God had opened up this fissure as a way for Mar Tukla, who was fleeing from her enemies, and pointed to a deep groove or aqueduct high up in the side of the cliff as the path on which she walked. We traced this aqueduct almost to the fountain on the open land above.

Mar Tukla is said to have been a companion of St. Paul's; the tradition is doubtless ancient, and thus some light is thrown upon the antiquity of the channel-aqueduct, and perhaps on ancient Ma'lula itself, as those responsible for the tradition had no notion of its real origin.

Another day we followed the horse-path up the gorge and found quantities of tombs—some open and some in rooms. Here also were large chambers, partly cavernous and partly artificial. One was regularly vaulted, with incomplete pillars not extending far below the vault. It had a broad doorway, with sockets. It contained three vats, and a place that might have been a tomb, or a place for stores. Another contained lamp-niches, a stone seat, rings cut in floor and walls, plastered holes, and vats sunk in the stone floor, used now in the preparation of sumach.

To one approaching Ma'lula from the high lands to the west, the ledges of rock which line the summits of the hills above the amphitheatre seem to roll up to the sheer edge of the precipice like angry waves of grey-white foam. Or to take a milder figure, the ledges appear sometimes like the wrinkled surface of cream or curds. In the ledges above the Central or West Cliff we find the greatest number of rock-dwellings. These are cut so near the surface of the hill that sometimes the roof of the chamber is no more than a foot thick. Some rooms are high and spacious, others not high enough to stand in. One room had an arched recess, precisely like the modern yuk, in which the beds of the family are piled by day; seats; cupboards; rings in the roof. Some chambers



seem to have been ancient wine or oil presses, with vats at different levels connected by channels.

Outside were shallow, rectangular reservoirs. One chamber had a hole near the roof in the back wall, connecting it with a room cut in a higher ledge of the mountain. The chambers are near each other and the top of the hill is quite honey-combed with this rock-city. No tombs occur here.

Mar Serkis, the Latin Serjius, is perched on these cliffs. It is a plain quadrangle with two galleried stories about a court, and has a chapel with small dome in the centre. Within the chapel we found a stone screen, with a series of western-looking panel pictures above. The altar was canopied, surmounted by dome and cross.

At the back of the nave was a ruined gallery. The convent belongs to the Greek Catholics. In the Greek Orthodox churches the screen is usually wooden, with three doors, surmounted by panels and a huge wooden cross, with painting on it. There is only one priest at Mar Serkis, who received us hospitably. There are no monks. The wine of the convent, so the priest said, is celebrated. It seemed very pure, but somewhat heavy and flavourless. A fine fruit garden stretches behind the convent, at some little distance below.

The Cave-Castle of the North Cliff is approached from above, as it opens into the face of the rock, some 100 feet above its base. We toiled up the sloping ledges, crawled through a small tunnel on our hands and knees, and then descended a narrow fissure in which little holes were notched, to a short ladder dropping to the cave itself. The descent from the tunnel above must have measured 30 or 35 feet if not more. The view was splendid; taking in the grandly-coloured cliffs opposite, the richly green gardens far below, the white houses of the town, also far below, the roofs covered with brush, with people walking over them, the dome of Mar Serkis, and the green of the vines on the upper hills of yellow, saffron, brown, white, and maize.

The floor of the cave was very sloping. In front was a parapet of stones and mud. Along the face the cave dimensions were 50 by 20 feet. At one end it rounded into the mountain to a further depth of 25 feet. The cave seemed mostly natural. In the roof were two holes, evidently artificial, apparently drilled from above; and there was a larger hole in the wall, soon branching into two funnels. Could this have been for water supply?

We have now touched on all the rock dwellings and chiselled stones of Ma'lula except those under the further end of the North Cliff. The largest chamber we found was one recently opened in the hill, below our tent. This measured 20 by 40 feet. Its roof was supported by four pillars—the natural rock left standing when the room was carved out. It was divided into two parts by a low wall, only two or three feet high. It contained seats, rings, niches for lamps, etc.

The only sign of sculpture was on a detached boulder above the tent. Here, on two arched panels, were figures of a man and woman, or two

men perhaps, the features quite destroyed. On the arched border of one panel was this inscription :—

ΕΓΝΑΤΙΑΡΕΡΕΝΙΚΗΤΑΙΟCΙΟΥΑΙΟC  
 ? ? ?  
 ΑΡC C

After all this detail about tombs, chambers, and caves, perhaps a few words of recapitulation will make the matter clearer.

We have in ancient Ma'lula not only a large rock cemetery, but a town of rock dwellings, which must have supported no small population. While some tombs are found in recesses and chambers, the majority are in the surface of rocks. Dwelling-houses are thickest on the hill behind the West Cliff, where there are no tombs. Below, tombs and chambers occur side by side. There may have been a large public building against the South Cliff. Both North and South Cliffs have cave-castles. Numerous beam-ends show that houses of wood or hewn stone occurred, in addition to the rock-dwellings. The business part of the town must have been above the North Gorge, where the vats, pits, &c., are rather more numerous, though they are found elsewhere. As to the origin of the cave dwellings, the present people of Ma'lula seem to have no idea.

The traditions of the place cluster around Mar Tukla. This convent is most picturesquely placed in the angle made by the North Cliff with the North Gorge. Its many buildings are shown at different angles on the steep slope. Terraces, arcades, courts, diversify its appearance.

A series of arches, with wall, set in the face of a lofty cavern in the cliff above makes a most charming combination of art and nature. We sent our servant on before to announce us, and then followed him up to the comfortably furnished room where the head of the convent received us. The Archimandrite Macarius Saleba is a Syrian, of about 60 years, with pleasant, if somewhat patronising, manner. His face is agreeable, dignified, though not intellectual. He asked many questions, for example, as to the relative position of New York and London. He was much interested in hearing of our visit to the Convent of St. Catherine at Sinai. On our showing him a ring consecrated on the Saint's relics and presented to us by the Prior, he took it, crossed his right eye with it, then the left, then the mouth. We were served with sweets, including delicious *mastik*, a drink prepared from some fruit essence, which made us all, including the servant, quite ill later on, and delicious coffee. My friend had a small detective camera which takes a picture about 3½ inches square. The Archimandrite asked us to take his likeness. However, he gave such elaborate instructions to his deacon to bring robes, a great silver cross, &c., &c., that I told him that after all the result would be but small. "What!" said he. "Not as large as that picture?" pointing to some coarse print on the wall two or three feet square. "No," said I; "it cannot be larger than this," pointing to the tiny camera. The Archimandrite was disgusted. "Here, take this cross," he said, and it was a

few moments before his dignity recovered the attack made upon it. It is needless to add he refused to be photographed.

Mar Tukla, according to the Prior's account, lived "40 years after Christ." Her name in Greek was Seleukias. (A man in the village told us that the ancient name of Ma'lula was Seleukia.) She was a native of Iconium, was engaged to the son of the King, but on her conversion desired to lead a single life, and fled. On reaching Ma'lula the miraculous passage was opened for her. She followed St. Paul to Rome. He said to her: "You have become as one of us; return to your own country and preach the Gospel." Later she lived in the cave above the Convent, which we visited with the deacon. Here a basin of ice-cold water (very holy) is formed by the perpetual droppings from the rock above. She lived in the part of the cave where the small chapel is built. Here are brought the sick of all creeds, including Moslems and Druzes, for cure. The deacon told us that only two days before a woman had been brought from Suddud (the ancient Zedad mentioned in Numb. xxxiv, 8, two days' journey from Ma'lula), all doubled up and carried in a box. She slept one night in the chapel and returned to her town, walking. At the back of the chapel is a small closed aperture, behind which the Saint was buried. A workman once tried to open the tomb, but a blast or some power came out which either paralysed or killed him.

Later on, in Damascus, I heard from the Ma'lulites there resident some more legends and tales of Mar Tukla, which I insert here. According to my informants, her people were Moslems. It will be remembered in this connection that she was a companion of St. Paul's. When fleeing from her persecutors she passed a fellah. Taking up a burnt stick, she stuck it into the ground, and said to the peasant, "If people come along and inquire for a girl, tell them that the girl who passed by planted this." She went on her way, and presently her people appeared. The burnt stick had put forth flowers; the persecutors, evidently believing that the girl who planted that shrub could not have passed recently, turned back, giving up the pursuit. When living in her cave she cured people by laying hands on the head. After her death her people came to steal her body; she appeared in the night to the Prior of the Convent and said, "They have stolen my body." At the third summons he arose, went in pursuit, and brought back the body.

Mar Tukla's presence in the village is a real thing to the people to-day. They speak of her as a "lady we have here." A friend of mine was recently in the village and heard an excited discussion. A man who had a dispute about money matters was declaring that Mar Tukla had appeared to him in a field, and had given her judgment of the affair; as the decision was favourable to himself, some scepticism prevailed in the opposite party. However, many believed in the appearance.

My Ma'lula friends say that once a man coming from Hums was greatly imperilled by a storm of rain and snow. He cried out, "If God will save me and my beast, I will offer a drop of oil to the Saint at Ma'lula." Immediately the storm ceased. On arriving at the Convent

he expressed his gratitude by offering half a pint of oil to Mar Tukla. Then he ate his dinner and spent a pleasant evening. Later on he visited the cave and found something wrong with the oil, just what I could not understand. However, he went to the Prior, told his story, and asked why the Saint was displeased. "Ah!" said the Prior. "You have not performed your vow. You promised a drop, and you presented half a pint. The Saint wishes no more and no less than you vow." So the man mounted to the cave, poured off all the oil but one drop, and the Saint was appeased.

A boy declared to me that he had seen a girl arrive in the village from Kuryatan, carried by four men, accompanied by her mother and bridegroom. She slept in the cave, and the boy affirms that he saw her the next day cured.

Another tale declares that a man in Salhieh, a suburb of Damascus, suffered with "all kinds of diseases." Having heard of Mar Tukla, he fattened a sheep and took it to Ma'lula as an offering. He was cured, and keeps up the offering yearly.

One evening a European arrived at the village and asked for shelter. He was taken in by the uncle of Machoil, the lad who taught me what I know of his dialect. During the evening the stranger said that he had had much pain in his legs for years; he had tried many medicines with no success. The host then said: "We have a lady here who can cure you." "Who is she, and what can she do?" said the Frank. The host then related the cures of the Saint. The Frank, however, remained unconvinced. Presently beds were spread on the floor and they retired. In the night the stranger felt some one treading on his legs and feet. Up he jumped, seized his host by the throat, and demanded what he meant by walking over him. The host indignantly repudiated the charge, and the fight would have waxed severe had not the Ma'lulite bethought himself of "the lady." "She has come to cure you," he declared. The next morning the Frank found that his pains had disappeared. His unbelief vanished, and he went up to the convent to make his acknowledgments to the Saint.

I asked if many Ma'lulites had been cured. "Not one," was the answer, "and the reason is this—when one of us is ill he says, I will go up to the convent and see whether perhaps the lady will cure me! It is that *perhaps* that spoils everything. We live in the place, and have no means of proving our faith. Those who travel, with difficulty, two, three, and four days, prove the strength of their faith, and so the Saint heals them."

To return to the convent. Besides the prior and the deacon, a nun was the only other person we saw in the establishment. There are suites of new rooms for the accommodation of numerous Damascenes who make Ma'lula a place for summer resort. On leaving they make presents to the convent. Similar guests are entertained at Mar Serkis. It was curious to notice in one of the rooms the yukh (or place for beds), so similar to what is carved from rock in the cave-dwellings.

The Archimandrite could tell us nothing of the history of the convent, but it was his impression that while the place was always held sacred, a convent had not been built till centuries after the Saint's death. I am sorry to say that we left without entering the church. This was an oversight that we meant to remedy. However, it was a simple square structure with flat roof. In no old convent in Syria have I seen a pointed roof, except in the church of the ruined square convent of Mar Mousa, in a gorge to the east of Nebk, off the Palmyra Road. This Mar Mousa Church bears a strong architectural resemblance to Justinian's Church at Mount Sinai.

My friend in the village told me that in an old book, no longer in the town, it was stated that Mohammed never entered Ma'lula, though the inhabitants hid for twelve years in the Cliff Castle. By "Mohammed," I suppose we may understand the Moslem army. I refer to this fact as significant in its possible relation to the survival of the old dialect, while the Arabic of the Conquerors supplanted this same old dialect in the rest of Syria, save in the small villages of Bukh'a and Jeb'adin, not far from Ma'lula itself. It is difficult, perhaps idle, to speculate on the reasons for this sporadic survival. However, it is possible that if the people of Ma'lula kept out the conqueror, or if for some reason the conqueror did not care to enter, the population of this wild, secluded gorge, might have kept purer and more intact than that of the rest of Syria, and that this might account for the preservation of their own language. Once preserved for a century or so, during which it had disappeared from the rest of the country, local pride and local tradition would be enough to retain it as a local dialect. The people seemed to us proud of their language. Meanwhile, the Arabic spoken by the Ma'lulites is of the Damascus type, far purer in accent than that of their neighbours in Ma'arra, which bears a distinct Syriac flavour in its vocalization. This is curious, but admits of explanation. The people of Ma'arra gradually adopted the Arabic as their sole language, retaining the broad Syriac vowels. The Ma'lulites learned Arabic as a foreign tongue, and kept the Syriac vocalization for the Syriac language, pronouncing the Arabic like the Arabs. For example, the ordinary Arabic word for Damascus is pronounced by the Ma'arrites *Shawm*, by the Ma'lulites *Shém*. However, such a speculation is a delicate one. Nebk and Yebrûd, situated hardly six miles apart, have easily distinguished accents.

Bukh'a and Jeb'adin are Moslem villages, but there are indications that they were Christian not very long ago, perhaps within a couple of centuries. Bukh'a is on the high land above Ma'lula, and a few miles to the north. It is a miserable village, containing about twenty houses. Jeb'adin is to the south of Ma'lula, about an hour away. It is approached by a wild gorge, and its fifty or more houses occupy the hills above. The dialect in these villages differs somewhat from that of Ma'lula. Even in my hurried visit I noticed a difference in the form of some words. It is strange that the dialect should have survived in these two villages, and should have disappeared in 'Ain-etîny, which is much nearer Ma'lula.

Possibly they may have been more closely affiliated to Ma'lula, by inter-marriage, trade, &c.

Since writing the above I have paid a visit to Damascus, for the purpose of verifying the notes taken in Ma'lula upon its dialect. To these notes I have made such additions as will enable me to present a brief sketch of the language. Writing in Feirût I have no access to any large library. Nöldeke, in 1862, published a brief treatise on the Anti-Libanus-Aramaic, which I have not seen. I learn from Burton and Drake's "Unexplored Syria" (London, 1872), that Dr. Socin spent two months in Ma'lula studying the dialect. If he has published anything I have not seen it. In the "Unexplored Syria" (vol. ii, pp. 264-271), there is a short description of Ma'lula, with lists of skulls and bones found there, and a list of a dozen or more words of the dialect.

The ovens in the Christian quarter of Damascus are, as a rule, worked by Ma'lulites, who are looked upon as quite a distinct class of people. They have a name for shrewdness. The bread boys are notably sharp and mischievous, as well as profane. At one of the ovens I found Macholl, the boy who had been my teacher at Ma'lula. I employed him again, because he had a rare faculty of answering questions, giving neither more nor less than what was asked. The Ma'lula dialect is not written, and very few of the villagers read and write Arabic. Hence a sharp boy whom one could keep to the point made the best teacher.

I transliterate words of the dialect into Latin characters for three reasons: 1st, as I have just noticed, the people do not write it themselves; 2nd, some letters have peculiar sounds; 3rd, many words are almost pure Arabic.

ب (*beth*) is sometimes hard like our B, but is often pronounced like P, eg. *ob*, father, *ippai* = my father. *Dhappopa* = fly. This difference is observed to-day in the Oriental pronunciation of the classic Syriac.

ڤ (*Gomal*) (1) like a softened Arabic غ or a thick Parisian R; (2) like the soft Arabic ج in 'aja why; also in *sejratha* tree, and *thelja* snow, both of which are very near the Arabic.

؟ (*dolath*) like TH in that—as in Dbemsek (Damascus). Also like T; ex. *Blota*, town, &c. The relative ؟ is pronounced t.

The hard sound of D appears rarely; ex. *Mdintcha*, city.

ܐ (*cheth*) is like the Arabic ܐ

But the ܐ sound occurs *kharufa*, sheep; *khuttuma*, servant, and some other Arabic words.

ܐ (*Koph*) is like *ch* in the Scottish *loch*, ex. *chathoba* = book. It also has the hard *c* sound in many Arabic words, and in the Syriac *dhuctha* = place; *malca* = king, &c.

ܐ (*Ee*) is usually like the Arabic ع But I noticed the ع sound *ghubura* = dust, and *Shoghala* = work, which are near the Arabi forms.

ⲉ (Pe) is like the Arabic ف F.

ⲟ (Qoph) loses its guttural sound, and is pronounced like simple K.

ⲥ (Shin) is *Sh*. The *S* sound occurs, but seems usually traceable to an Arabic ص Sad, or Syriac ܣ Notice, however, Sejratha, (Arabic س).

ⲧ (tau) is like TH in *thin*, eg. *ichthab* = he writes. It also has the sound of TCH as in the English word *hutch*, ex. *hatch* = thou.

In some words derived from the Arabic the T sound occurs.

In my transliteration the following letters and combinations have the following values :—

SH, as in *shop*, representing shin.

TCH, as in *hutch* „ one sound of tau.

TH, as in *thin* „ another sound of tau.

GH, sounded like Ar. ڭ representing gomal.

CH, as in Scottish *loch* „ soft koph.

C „ *cat*, representing hard koph.

K (no guttural) „ qoph.

Ĥ, representing aspirate cheth.

KH „ rough cheth.

DH, as in *that*, representing dolath.

T represents soft sound of dolath.

Ṭ „ teth.

' „ ee.

In words plainly borrowed from the Arabic *t* also represents ت

The influence of the Arabic on the dialect has been great. Without pretending to mention all the indications of this influence, I name a few particulars :—

1. The structure of sentences in the Ma'lula dialect follows closely that of the common Arabic. Connectives have been transferred bodily. Further on I give an example of narrative which illustrates this.

2. Many words are plainly borrowed from the Arabic, but these are usually given a Syriac termination, and altered in pronunciation, and sometimes in accent. (Some words, however, are unaltered.)

Furshta (bed), Arabic, فرشة

Durba (road) „ درب

'Aiba (shame) „ عيب

Tchuchtcha (bedstead), Arabic, تخت

3. The adjective in comparison undergoes internal changes as in Arabic.

*Korsa* (cold), *akras* (colder), *iñil* (sweet), *ahla* (sweeter).

4. Salutations, complimentary phrases, proverbs, &c., &c., are generally Arabic, with slight accommodation to the Syriac pronunciation and accent.

5. The unclassical Arabic auxiliary expressions, *beddi*, *beddu*, &c. joined with the verb to express desire, and 'am, to express continuous action in the present, have been transferred as in the phrases *betnīdhmūch* = I wish to sleep; *bennīchul* = I wish to eat; 'annochil = I am eating; 'amshoth = I am drinking.

**NOUNS.**—Masculine nouns usually end in *â*, and accent the penultimate. They form their plural in *ô*, which takes the accent: Chêfa (stone), chêfo; hsonâ (horse), hsanô; bsonâ (child), bsinô. In the last two examples note the modification of the root-vowel.

Feminine nouns usually end in *tha*, and form their plural in *iotha*; bisnītha (girl), bsiniotha; shunītha (woman), shuniotha; baitha (house), baithiotha, where the *th* as a sign of the feminine appears in the plural.

M'artha (cave) has the plural M'arô, and chowcabtha (star) the plural chowc-bô.

The pronominal suffixes are as follows:—

1. For masculine nouns—

Singular, hsonâ (horse).

1st (my horse), hson.	1st (our), hsonâh.
2nd masc. (thy), hsonach.	2nd masc. (your), hsonchun.
2nd fem. (thy), hsonish.	2nd fem. (your), hsonchin.
3rd masc. (his), hsonî.	3rd masc. (their), hsonun.
3rd fem. (has), hsonâ.	3rd fem. (their), hsonin.

Plural, hsanô (horses).

1st (my horses), hsanoi.	1st (our), hsanênâh.
2nd masc. (thy), hsanoch.	2nd masc. (your), hsanêchun.
2nd fem. (thy), hsanosh.	2nd fem. (your), hsanêchin.
3rd masc. (his), hsanoi.	3rd masc. (their), hsanêhun.
3rd fem. (her), hsanoya.	3rd fem. (their), hsanêhin.

*Note.*—The vowel ê in hsanênâh, &c., approximates in sound to the diphthong *ai*.

2. For feminine nouns—

*Singular.* Baitha (house), baith or baitha (my house), baithach (thy house), baithish (thy house), fem., &c., &c., like the suffixes of the sing. masc. noun.

The *plural*, baithiotha, also takes the singular suffixes: baithioth (my houses), baithiothach (thy houses), baithiothah (our houses), &c., &c.

The noun *ob* (father) takes peculiar suffixes.



*S'ng. Suffixes.*

1st, ippai (my father).  
 2nd masc., obuch.  
 2nd fem., obush.  
 3rd masc., obu.  
 3rd fem., obu.

*Plural Suffixes.*

1st, abunah (our).  
 2nd masc., abuchun.  
 2nd fem., abuchin.  
 3rd masc., abuhun.  
 3rd fem., abuhin.

In these various suffixes may be observed—(1) classical Syriac forms as *och* (which, however, attaches itself to a plural rather than a singular noun); (2) an Arabic suffix (with the *ع*) pronounced soft) in *hsonach*; (3) some peculiar forms, as in *hsonish*, *hsonah*, &c.

I add a short list of common nouns for comparison with the classical and Arabic forms:—

Raisha	= head.	Cilmtha	= word.
'Aina	= eye.	Shimsha	= sun.
Reghra	= foot.	Nura	= fire.
Furshta	= bed.	Tchuchtcha	= bedstead.
Bisra	= meat.	Sahara	= moon.
Sejratha	= tree.	Dhuctha	= place.
Hwoya	= air.	Hona	= brother.
Hoth	= sister.	Bshola	= cooked food.
Ar'a	= ground.	Thelja	= snow.
Shoptha	= week.	Shmo	= heaven.
'Afra	= earth.	Ghubura	= dust.
Chathoba	= book.	Safrona	= bird.
Shenna	= rock.	Ghanna	= garden.
Ghubelcha	= cheese.	Durba	= road.
Sara	= hair.	Chsuru	= wood.
Mdintcha	= city.	Yarha	= month.

## PRONOUNS.

The *personal pronouns* are as follows:—

1st sing., Ana = I.  
 2nd masc., Hatch or hatchi = thou.  
 2nd fem., Hash or hashi = thou.  
 3rd masc., Hû.  
 3rd fem., Hi.  
 1st plural, Anah = we.  
 2nd masc., Hatchchun = you.  
 2nd fem., Hatchchin = you.  
 3rd masc., Hin or hinnun = they.

*Demonstrative Pronouns.*

*Masc.* Hanna = this. *Fem.* Hodh or ho = this.

*Masc.* Hothi = that. *Fem.* Hotha = that.

*Plu.* Hathin = those.

*Relative.*—The classical ۛ appears but is pronounced t.

The interrogatives are *mon* = who, and *mo* = what

*The Numerals to Ten.*

1. Ahadh.	6. Shitcha.
2. Ithr.	7. Shob'a.
3. Thlotha.	8. Thmonya.
4. Urba'.	9. Tish'a.
5. Hamsha.	10. 'Asra.

VERBS.—The regular strong verb is inflected as follows :—

Ichthab = he wrote.

Idhmich = he slept.

*Preterite.*

3rd masc. sing., Ichthab	Idhmich, or -michli.
3rd fem. „ Chathbath	Dhimchath.
2nd masc. „ Chathbitch	Dhimchitch.
2nd fem. „ Chathbish	Dhimchish.
1st c. „ Chathbith	Dhimchith.
3rd c. plu., Ichthab	Idhmich.
2nd masc. plu., Chathbitchchun	Dhimchitchchun.
2nd fem. „ Chathbitchchin	Dhimchitchchin.
1st c. „ Chathbinnah	Dhimchinnah.

The 2nd masc., 2nd fem., and 1st c. plural, seem to be formed by adding the pronouns *hatchechun*, *hatchchin*, and *anah* to the root with little change. The 2nd pers. pronouns, *hatchi* and *hashi*, may be traced perhaps, but less clearly, in the 2nd sing. verbal forms. The other forms vary little from the classic, 3rd sing. and 3rd plural being pronounced alike. Note, however, the prosthetic vowel which almost always occurs in the 3rd person. I have noticed one exception : *rahm*, *he loved*, instead of *irham*. Note also the alternative form, *idhmichli*.

The *present and future* are generally expressed by forms based on the participle ; the preformatives of *n* and *tch* may be explained as traces of *ana*, *anah*, *hatchi*, &c., hurriedly repeated and then assimilated to the participle.

*Singular, rôchib (he rides).*

3rd masc., rôchib.  
 3rd fem., rôchba.  
 2nd masc., tchrochib.  
 2nd fem., tchrochba.  
 1st c., n-rochib.

*Plural.*

3rd masc., rochbin.  
 3rd fem., rochban.  
 2nd masc., tchrochbin.  
 2nd fem., tchrochban.  
 1st c., n-rochbin.

In subordinate clauses, as of purpose, &c., we find traces of the regular future (or imperfect) tense, as *zelli yidhmuch* (he went that he might sleep). The phrase *bettu yichthub* (he wishes to write) follows a colloquial Arabic idiom :—

Sing., 3rd masc., bettu yichthub.  
 „ 3rd fem., betta tchichthub.  
 „ 2nd masc., bettach „  
 „ 2nd fem., bettish „  
 „ 1st c., bennichthub.  
 Plu., 3rd masc., bettân y-chuthbun.  
 „ 3rd fem., „ y-chuthban.  
 „ 2nd masc., betchun tch-chuthbun.  
 „ 2nd fem., „ tch-chuthban.  
 „ 1st c., bettañ nichthub.

*Note.*—There is no trace of the *n* preformative in the 3rd masc. peculiar to the classic Syriac. It occurs instead in the 1st sing. and plu. The *y* preformative, foreign to the classic Syriac, occurs in 3rd pers. sing. and plu.

*The imperative is :—*

2nd masc. rchab ; 2nd f. irchab ; 2nd plural, ruchbun.

I did not hear an infinitive used. The verbal noun *riding* is *ruchb-tha*. I give suffixes of Iktal and Kutlith, 3rd and 1st pers. sing. of preterite.

*Iktal.**Kutlith.*

Suf. 1st sing. Kutal (he killed me)—	
„ 2nd s.m. Kutlach.	Kutlitchach.
„ 2nd s.f. Kutlish.	Kutlitchish.
„ 3rd s.m. Kutli.	Kutlitchi.
„ 3rd s.f. Kutla.	Kutlitcha.
„ 1st plu. Kutlennah.	
„ 2nd pl. m. Kutlanchun.	Kutlitchechun.
„ 2nd pl. f. Kutlanchin.	Kutlitchchin.
„ 3rd pl. m. Kutlan.	Kutlitchun.
„ 3rd pl. f. „	Kutlitchin.

Another way is to use *lomadh*, ex. *Inchus*, he butchered ; with suffixes—*nachisil*, *nachislach*, *nachislash*, *nachisli*, &c., &c.

*Kotil* (participial present), with suffixes : *katelli*, killing him ; *katella*, killing her ; *katil*, killing me ; *katellach*, killing thee, &c. And so

the other forms as *n-kotil* (I am killing), *n-katelli*, *n-katellach*, *n-katellish* &c., &c.

The *passive In-ktal* has the endings of the active preterite: *In-ktal*, *inkutlath*, *inkutlitch*, *inkutlith*, &c., &c.

The *intensive. Bukkar*, to know; Preterite, *bukkar*, *bukrath*, *bukritch*, *bukrish*, &c. &c.

The *future* (clearly based on the participle with *m*), *mbukkar*, *mbukra* *tch-mbukkar*, *n-mbukkar*, &c.

The *Pe Nun* verb *Inchus*, he killed, does not lose the *nun* in any part, but is inflected like the strong verb. *Inchus*, *nachsath*, *nachsitch*, &c.; *fut. nochis*, *technochis*, &c.; *imper. n-chas*.

The *Pe olaf* verb *achal* (he ate), *Pret. achal*, *achlath*, *achlitch*, &c.; *fut. ôchil*, *ôchla*, *tchôchil*, *nôchil*, &c.; *Imper. 2nd m.*, *chôl*; *2nd f.*, *achûl*; *2nd m. pl.*, *uchlun*; *2nd f. pl.*, *uchlin*, *I wish to eat* = *bennîchul*.

*Ilif* (both vowels short) may be a *Pe olaph*, or a *pe yudh* verb (classic).

*Pret. ilif*, *ilfath*, *ilfitch*, &c., &c.; *fut. lôif*, *lôifa*, *tchlôif*, *nlôif*, &c.

*Ailif*, to teach, is the causative form; *Pret. ailif*, *ailfath*, &c.; *fut. mailif*, *mailfa*, *tchmailif*, &c., &c.

I wish to learn = *betnîlaf*.

He wishes to learn = *betti yîlaf*.

I wish to teach = *betnêilaf*.

He wishes to learn = *betti yêilaf*.

Similar to this verb is *irib*, he grew great. *Pret. irib*, *irbath*, &c.; *fut. roib*, *tch-roib*, *n-roib*, &c.—

He wishes to increase = *betti yîrub*.

I wish „ „ = *betnîrub*.

The verb *ap* he gave, is the classic **אָפּ**

*Pret. ap*, *appath*, *appitch*, &c.

*Fut. map*, *mapya*, *tchmap*, *tchmapya*, *n-map*, &c.

*Imper. appa*, *fem. appai*; *pl. appun*, *appin*.

*Ap*, with suffixes of the indirect object:

Suf. 1st sing. c.,	<i>appil</i> or <i>applil</i>	=	he gave me.
„ 2nd „ m.,	<i>appêch</i> or <i>applêch</i>	=	„ thee.
„ „ f.,	<i>appish</i> or <i>applish</i>	=	„ thee.
„ 3rd „ m.,	<i>appêli</i> or <i>applêli</i>	=	„ him.
„ „ f.,	<i>appêla</i> or <i>applêla</i>	=	„ her.
„ 1st pl. c.,	<i>appêh</i>	=	„ us.
„ 2nd pl. m.,	<i>appêlchun</i>	=	„ you.
„ „ f.,	<i>appelchin</i>	=	„ you.
„ 3rd „ m.,	<i>appêlun</i>	=	„ them.
„ „ f.,	<i>appêlin</i>	=	„ them.

The forms with and without lomadh seem to be used indifferently.

Other suffixes are : I gave him = applilli ; I gave her = applella ; I gave thee = applillach ; she gave him = applelli ; thou gavest him = applitchli ; they gave him = appulli ; you gave him = aptchulli ; we gave him = apnahli.

*Map*, with indirect object : mappîl, mapêch, mapîsh, mapêli, mapêla, mappêh, mappêlun, &c., &c.

The *causative* is *owpîl*, to deliver—*l* is used as an auxiliary letter apparently.

*Pret.* owpîl, owplath, owplitch, &c.

*Fut.* mowpîl, mowpla, tchmowpîl, &c.

*Imper.* owpîl, owplun.

Note the trace of *yudh*, lost in the *peal* form.

*Ee vau verb.*—Akam (note the prosthetic vowel) is inflected : Akam, komath, komitch, &c. ; *plural* akam, komitchchun, &c.

*Fut.* koim, koima, tchkoim, &c.

*Imper. Sing. masc.* kôm, *fem.* kâm. *Plu. masc.* kumôn, *fem.* kuman.

*Lomadh Olaph verbs.*—Ishtch—he drank—is inflected.

*Pret.* Ishtch, ishtchath, ishtchitch, &c.

*Fut.* Shoth, shothya, tchoth, &c. ; *plu.* shothin, shothan, tchoth n, tchothyan, n-shothin.

Note how in *tchoth*, *sh* disappears before the preformative *tch*.

*Imper. mas.* Ishtcha or shtcha ; *fem.* stchai ; *plural* Ishtschôn or shtchôn ; *fem.* shtchîn.

*Ihim, he saw.*

*Pret.* Ihim, ihmath, ihmitch, &c. ; *plu.* ihm, ihmitchchun, himinnah, &c.

*Fut.* Hom, homya, tchhom, &c.

*Imper. masc.* Ihma, *fem.* hmai, *plu.* ihmun, *fem.* ihmîn.

*Ihim*, with suffixes :—

Ihimni = he saw him.

Ihimna = „ her.

Ihimnach = „ thee.

h-mânun = he saw them.

h-menchun = „ you.

h-mennah = „ us.

*Hom*, with suffixes :—

hamîl = seeing me.

hamêch = „ thee.

hamîsh = „ thee (f.).

hameli = „ him.

hamêla = „ her.

hameh = seeing us.

&c. &c.

&c. &c.

*If* (to bake), Hebrew יפן, is both *Pe olaph* and *lomadh olaph*.

*Pret.* if, ifath, &c. *Fut.* ôf, tchôf, nôf, &c. *Imper. masc.* ifa ; *fem.* ifai ; *plu. masc.* funin ; *fem.* finu.

In all these verbs the final radical disappears (except, perhaps, in forms *homya*, *hmai*, &c.), and the regular endings attach themselves to the second radicals.

There is a group of verbs which have peculiar terminations: tholi he came; zelli he went; and k'oli, he sat (*i.e.*, sat as a servant, served). The first two are evidently the classic 𐤆𐤋𐤁 and 𐤆𐤋𐤁, with an auxiliary lomadh appearing in some forms. K'oli seems to belong to the same class.

*Preterite.*

3rd sing., masc.,	Tholi.	Zelli.	K'oli.
" "	fem., Thalla.	Zlella.	K'alla.
2nd " m.,	Thitchlach.	Zlitchlach.	K'itchlach.
" " f.,	Thishlish.	Zlishlish.	K'ishlish.
1st " c.,	Thil.	Zhil.	K'il.
3rd, plu., masc,	Tholun.	Zellun.	K'olun.
" " f.,	Tholin.	Zellin.	K'olin.
2nd " m.,	Thitchchun.	Zlitchchun.	K'itchchun.
" " f.,	Thitchchin.	Zlitchchin.	K'itchchin.
1st " c.,	Thinnah.	Zlinnah.	K'innah.

*Future.*

3rd sing., m.,	Thêli.	Zelli.	K'elli.
" " f.,	Thiola.	Zlola.	K'iola.
2nd " m.,	Tchthêch.	Zellach.	Tchk'êch.
" " f.,	Tchthiosh.	Tchzlush.	Tchk'iosh.
1st " c.,	N-thil.	Nzil.	N-k'il.
3rd plu., m.,	Thyillun.	Zhillun.	K'illun.
" " f.,	Thyillin.	Zlellin.	K'illun.
2nd plu., m.,	Tchthilchun.	Tchzilechun.	Tchka'ilchun.
" " f.,	Tchthilchin.	" in.	" in.
1st " c.,	N-thyillah.	N-zillah.	N-ka'ililah.

*Imper.*

2nd sing., m.,	Thoch.	Zêch.	K'ach.
" " f.,	Thosh.	Zish or Zellish.	K'ash.
" plu. m.,	Thalchun.	Zlelchun.	K'elchun.
" " f.,	Thalchin.	" in.	K'elchin.

The endings of these verbs in the pret. and fut. sing. and imp. sing. bear a strong resemblance to the pronominal suffixes attached to verbs, nouns, and the preposition lomadh. Only in the plural do the forms resemble those of the ordinary strong verb.

Notice here the resemblance of some of the forms to the strong classical imperative with the "ethical dative" with *lomadh*, 𐤆𐤋𐤁 (zel loch), 𐤆𐤋𐤁 𐤆𐤋𐤁; also 𐤆𐤋𐤁 𐤆𐤋𐤁 (tho loch) 𐤆𐤋𐤁 𐤆𐤋𐤁.

لَو, &c. It seems as if an inflection, in preterite and future, had been built by analogy upon these imp. forms with *l*.

The verb *to be* (corresponding in use to the Arabic كان) is *wob*.

(WOB) *Preterite*.

3rd sing. m., wob.	3rd plu. m., waibîn.
" " f., waiba.	" " f., waiban.
2nd " m., tchob or tchobi.	2nd " m., utchibîn.
" " f., ushîba.	" " f., utchiban.
1st " m., unob or nob.	1st " m., unibîn.
" " f., unîba.	" " f., uniban.

*Future*.

3rd sing. m., ob or yîbtchob.	3rd plu. m., aibân.
" " f., tchib.	" " f., aiban.
2nd " m., tchib.	2nd " m., tchibîn.
" " f., tchiba.	" " f., tchiban.
1st " c., unob or nob.	1st " c., nibîn.

This inflection may possibly be based upon a combination of the verb **لَو** and the preposition **ب** (beth). The colloquial Arabic expression *fi* signifies (like *wob*) *there is*; *FINI* comes to mean *it is in me* or *I can*; *FIK*, *it is in you* or *you can*. Some such use might explain the form *wob*, and the other forms might be accounted for if we regard *wob* as taken as a root, given feminine and plural terminations as in *waiba*, *waibîn*, and *waiban*, and combined with pronominal fragments as in *tchob*, *utchibîn*, and *unob*.

*There is* is also expressed by *ûth*; *there is not* = *tchûth*.

*There was* is *woth*.

*He became* is *îthcan*, inflected *thicnath*, *thicnitch*, &c.

*Fut.* *thocan*, *n-thocan*, &c.

The preposition **ل** (*lomdah*) takes its suffixes thus:—

1st sing., *lîl*; 2nd sing. masc., *lêch*; 2nd sing. fem., *lish*; 3rd sing. masc., *lêli*; 3rd sing. fem., *lêla*; 1st pl., *leah*; 2nd pl. masc., *lêlchun*; 2nd pl. fem., *lêlchin*; 3rd pl. masc., *lêlun*; 3rd pl. fem., *lêlin*.

The preposition *lomadh* is used in such phrases as: *mor il baitha*, the master of the house; *Ob il Machoîl*, Michael's father.

A few adverbs, particles, &c.:—

Hosh	= now.	Lina	= where?
Il'il	= up.	Emma	= where?
Ira'	= down.	Hannuc	= where?
Imodh	= to-day.	Ikdhum	= before
Rumish	= yesterday.		(conj.).
Imhar	= to-morrow.	Aja'	= why?
Bothar	= after (prep.).	Tchu	= not.

Kayyam	= after (conj.).	Hutta	= in order
Hocha	= here.		that.
Dhuk or dhikli	= when.	Laow or Izzatchob	= if.

I add a Ma'lula-Syriac rendering of the parable of the Prodigal Son. The Ma'lula baker-boy, Machoil, like most of his fellow-townsmen, can neither read nor write, and does not easily follow "high Arabic." However, I repeated the parable to him in Arabic, simple, but as nearly equivalent to the original Syriac as possible. He gave me, bit by bit, the following translation. Later, by the aid of an oil lamp in the dark gloomy oven, I read the parable as given by him, to some Ma'lula men and boys, who easily re-translated it into Arabic.

Hence it will give a fair idea of the Ma'lula style of narrative.

Luke xv, 11-32.

11. Woth ghabrona ilê ithr ibr. 12. Z'ora amel lobu. Ya ippai appll kusmthi m-molach. Iksam lélun 'ishtchi. 13. Bothar yoma kalil, ajma' ibri z'ora chullemet, u-zelli 'a blato bhîdha, u-ilhil rowh il moli musrif bahar. 14. Dhuki rowwah chullemet t-ghappi, ithcin chufna bahar bathin blato, u-ithcin muhtchaj. 15. U-zelli u-k'oli ghap lahâdh marôil lathin blato, u-owpli l-bistchano yir'al l-hzîro. 16. U-bettu yimlel ghowwi mnenna khurnûb t-uchlilli h-zîro. La bernash appêli mit. 17. Dhukkil 'owwit l-nephshi omar; uchma aghîr ghap lippai t-ghappai lehma zayyit, u-ana hochâ ahl-cith mchufna. 18. N-kônzil la' lippai, u-namelli, ya ippai, ukhtith lishmo u-kommach. 19. U-lophash il fristcha hutta tchemmin ibrach. Shûn uchtahadh min aghîroch. 20. Akam, zelli la'lobu. Dhukkil wob ba'idh hemni obu, tehannan 'alê, arhit u-iskat 'a kdholi, u-neshki. 21. U-amelli ibri, ya ippai ukhtith l-shmo u-kommach, u-lophash il fristcha hutta tchemmin ibrach. 22. Omar obu laghirô, Aithûn chusso t-âhsin u-chuslulli, arhun khotchuna b-idhi, u-surmoytha b-rughri. 23. Aithun 'akkusha ma'lufa u-nuchsunni, u-nochlin u-nhodhin. 24. Hanna ibr wob imith u hosh aytib, wob dhayya u-iltchki. U-abbit hodhin. 25. Ibri rappa wob b-hokla; u dhuki tholi u-akrib il baitha ishmi' hessa nowbtha u-reghdha. 26. U-iz'ak 'a lahâdh m-naghiro, u-sha'li; mo ôth. 27. U-amelli, Honach tholi, u-obuch inchas 'akkusha ma'lufa, akbli bisslomtcha. 28. U-aghdhib, u-la sob ya'bur; u-infik obu y-tulpenni. 29. U-jowwibi u-amel lobu; ana mukhtemlach chullan ishno, u lîmodh la chulifitchach m-mit. B-ômrach lappitchil ghudhya hutta nihidh 'amlistikoi. 30. Lacawn dhuki tholi hanna ibrach t-rowwah il moli harîma t-zônyan nachsitchlêli 'akkusha ma'lufa. 31. U-amelli, ya ibr, hatch 'im chullan yomo, u-chutilil lech. 32. Wob wôjib 'alênâh nihidh u nimbsut; honach hanna wob imith u-ih, u-wob dhayya u-iltchki.

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Beirût, Syria.

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NOTES 11.—*Woth* = there was. *Ilê* to him. 12. *Amel lobu*, from *amr*, to say; *r* changed to *l* before *l* in *lobu* = to his father. *Ya* = O, common



Arabic mode of address. *Applil* = give me; *appa* is give. *Kusmthi m-molach*, the Arabic roots are used, my share of thy property. 13. *Bothar yoma kalil*; another expression is *bothar uchma yom*, after some days. *Chullemet* i.e., *حَلَمَت*. *Blatô*, plural form used for *district*; the sing., *Blota* signifies a town. *Ilhil* = there; *il moli* = the property, a use of the Arabic article. *Musrif* (Arabic) *bahar* = great expenditure, the simple dialect fails to express the "riotous living" better than this. 14. *Rowwah*, we have had the form *rowh* with just the same meaning—an illustration of the flexibility of form we find in many words which lengthen or shorten as the rhythm of the sentence may demand. For *when* we have *dhuk*, *dhuki*, *dhukkil*, *dhukli*, the form depending on the first letter of the next word as well as rhythm. *T-ghappi* = which he had; it is the classical *ذ*; I find no trace of it as a preposition; *ghap* is *with* denoting possession, &c. 15. *K'oli . . . blato* = "served at the house of one of the masters of that land." Observe the redundant use of the l. *Lathin* = *l-hathin*; *owpli* = sent him, *owpil*—aphel from *ap*. *Yir'al* we have noticed the y preformative in clauses of purpose. 16. *Mnenna*, from those; *t-uchlilli h-ziro*, which the swine eat (them). From *achal* w. suffix. *Bernash* = *بَرْنَش*; *mit* = *مِيت*. 'owwit, the Arabic *عَاوِد* *ghap lippai* = at my father's, redundant; *t-ghappai*, who have, lit. who with them. 18. *N-kônzil*, I will arise and go, a compound. The *kônzellah!* let us be off! is very common; *la'lippai*, very redundant; *namelli*, r lost or assimilated w. l of suffix. 19. *Lophash il fristcha* = there is no longer to me the right. *Hutta tchemmin* = that thou shouldst call me. 20. *Akam zelli*, he arose (and) went; conjunctions are often omitted; *hemni* = *ihm* with suffix. The Chaldaic *ܚܡܢܐ* equivalent to *Clas. Syriac* *ܚܡܢܐ* *tchannan 'alé* = Arabic; *Arhit* = he ran. 22. *Aithun*, imper. from *Aith*, causative of *tholi*, the fut. (part. form) is *maith*, *t-ahsin* = which (is) the best. *Chusullu* = dress him. *Surmoytha* = Arabic *صَرَمَايَا*. 23. *Ma'lufa* = Arabic — *مَعْلُوف* *nuchsunni*, imper. from *inchas*, with suffix. 24. *Hanna ibr* = this my son. *Hosh* = now. *Iltechki Ar* = *الْتَحَقِي* *Abbit hodhin*, they began to be merry; use of participle 25. *Akrib il baitha*, drew near to the house, *il* being probably the prep., with prosthetic vowel rather than a borrowed Arabic article. *Hessa* = Arabic *حَسَّ* 26. *Sha'li* Hebrew = *שָׁאֵל*, Syriac = *ܫܐܠܐ*; the Ma'lulites insert an *ee* in place of *olaph*. *Mo'oth* = what is this? They also say, *mo hanna*. 27. *Akbli*, &c., I could get no word for *because* (he has received &c.); such connections are seldom used. 28. *La sob ya'bur* = he did not wish to enter, *y-tulpenni* = that he might intreat him; Arabic = *يَطْلُبُوا* 29. *Mukhtemlach*, part. with suffix; Arabic root = *خَادِم* *Chullan iskho* = all these years; *limodh*, to this day; *la chuliftchach*, I have cost thee nothing. i.e., no trouble. Arabic *كَلَفْتُكَ* *m-mit*, in anything or of anything; *b-ôm-rach* = "in thy days," i.e., never; *lappitchil* = thou hast not given me; 'amlis-tikoi = 'am-listikoi, together with my friends. Arabic = *أَمْلِسْتَكُو* 30. *Lacawn* = but, however; *harîma t-zonyan* = women who (are) harlots; *Nach*.

*sitch-leli* = thou hast killed for him. 31. *Hatch'im* = thou (art) with me; *chutillil* = *chul-t-lil* = all which (is) to me, all that I have. 32. *Wajib 'alēnaḥ*,  
 واجب علينا  
 Arabic

Since my completion of this article Dr. Van Dyck has called my attention to the book *درة الغواص في اوهام الخواص* by *الحريري* where reference is made to some changes of consonants, &c., similar to what we find in the Ma'lula dialect. The *كشكشة ربيعة* (an Arab tribe) is changing the *كاف*, *كاف الوقف* to *شين* as *مابش* for *مابك*; and sometimes the *كاف*, which is not the *كاف الوقف*, is changed to *ش*, as in *جيدش جيدها* and *عيناش عيناها*.

Change of hamzeh to *ع* is also mentioned as in *اعن توسمت* for *ان توسمت*.

In Bethlehem, and among some Bedouins, to-day *ل* is pronounced like TCH. In Nazareth *ق* loses its guttural force. The Nuseiryeh, near Soffta, say *دهنت* instead of *انبت*, for the 2nd. pers. sing. of the pronoun.

F. J. B.

## ESSAYS ON THE SECTS AND NATIONALITIES OF SYRIA AND PALESTINE.

### ESSAY I, INTRODUCTION.

BY REV. GEORGE E. POST, M.A., M.D., F.L.S.

*The Physical Features, Climate, Soil, Water Supply, Natural History, and Health of Syria and Palestine.*

#### I.—Physical Features.

It is not the object of the present essay to present an exhaustive view of the topics enumerated in the title, but to show their bearing on the march of population in these lands, and the preservation of the races now represented, as well as the origination and destruction of those which have been represented in the past.

No country of equal size contains so strange an aggregate of heterogeneous elements, such a medley of irreconcilable sects and races, as the